

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached replacement drawing sheets 1, 2 and 3 replace the original drawing sheets 1, 2 and 3 comprising Figures 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 3, 4A, 4B and 4C. The amendments to the attached drawing sheets include: an amendment to Figure 2A (sheet 1), to include the reference sign "α"; an amendment to Figure 3 (sheet 3) to include the reference sign "68"; an amendment to Figure 4A (sheet 2) to include the reference signs "20" and "21"; and an amendment to Figure 4B (sheet 2) to include the reference signs "66" and "68", all of the aforementioned reference signs had previously been inadvertently omitted.

Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the drawings introduce no new matter into the instant application, and that support for these amendments can be found in the specification as originally submitted.

REMARKS

Status of Claims

- Claims 1 - 19 are pending.

Amendments to the Claims

- Claims 1 - 3, 10 - 11 are canceled by this amendment.
- Claims 5 - 9, 14 - 15 remain as originally submitted.
- Claims 4, 12, 13, 16 - 19 are currently amended.
- New independent Claim 20 is added by this amendment.

Objections:

The Office objected to the drawings as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) for failing to include the reference signs "α", "68", and "48", as described in the specification.

In response, Applicants have amended the drawings as described above in the "Amendments to the Drawings" section, to include the inadvertently omitted reference signs in the appropriate figures.

The Office objected to the abstract of the disclosure because of the use of legal phraseology, the word "means" in the sixth line.

In response, Applicants have amended the abstract of the specification, replacing the word "means" in the sixth line with the word "mechanisms".

The Office objected to claim 1 for informalities related to the omitted word "surface" between "interior" and "including".

In response, Applicants have canceled claim 1 and re-written claim 4 in independent form including the limitations of claim 1 and intervening claim 2. Claim 4 has additionally been amended to include the word "surface" between "interior" and "including".

The Office objected to claims 1 and 10 for informalities related to antecedence for the terms "the abutted ends", "the outside diameter" and "the minimum inside diameter".

In response, Applicants have canceled claims 1 and 10, and re-written claim 4 and claims 12 and 13 in independent form, incorporating the limitations of claims 1 and 10 respectively. Claims 4, 12 and 13 have been amended to cure the antecedence problems.

The Office objected to claim 19, line 3 for informalities related to an omitted "period" at the end of line 3.

In response, Applicants have amended claim 19 to include a period at the end of claim 19.

Allowable Subject Matter:

Claims 4 – 9 and 12 – 16 were objected to by the Office as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, Applicants have rewritten claim 4 in independent form, including intervening claim 2 and base claim 1. Also, claim 12 has been rewritten in independent form, including intervening claim 11 and base claim 10. Finally, claim 13 has been rewritten in independent form, including intervening claim 11 and base claim 10. Accordingly, claims 4, 12 and 13, and their dependent claims 5 – 9 and 14 – 16 are now in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102:

Claims 1 – 3, 10, 11 and 17 – 19 were rejected by the Office under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Cain (Patent Number US 2,790,409).

Regarding claims 1 – 3, 10 and 11:

In response, Applicants have canceled claims 1 – 3, 10 and 11. This leaves claims 17 - 19

Regarding claims 17 – 19:

Claims 17 – 19 were amended to depend from claim 13. As presented above, claim 13 is now in condition for allowance. Therefore, claims 17 – 19 are now also in condition for allowance.

Other Amendments:

Claim 4 as re-written in independent form includes the limitations of the original claims 1 and 2 (now canceled).

In line 6, “abutted ends” has been replaced with “the ends” to correct an antecedence problem.

In line 6 “...a split ring having an outside diameter and two ends...” has been added to cure the antecedence problems with the terms “the ends of said ring” and “the outside diameter of said split ring”. Support for this addition can be found in the original specification in Figures 2A, 2B, and 3 and paragraphs [0019] and [0020].

In line 8 “the minimum inside diameter” has been replaced with “a minimum inside diameter” to correct the antecedence problem.

Claim 12 as re-written in independent form includes the limitations of the original claims 10 and 11 (now canceled).

In line 2 "... members having abutted ends.." was added to cure an antecedence problem with "each abutted end". Support for this can be found in the original specification in Figures 1A and 1B and paragraph [0016].

In line 22 the word "spreader" was deleted to cure an antecedent problem with the element "spreader leg", antecedence being properly established with the element "leg".

Claim 13 as re-written in independent form includes the limitations of the original claims 10 and 11 (now canceled).

In line 22 "each spreader" has been replaced with "each leg of the spreader" to correct an antecedence problem. Support for the change can be found in the original specification in Figures 3, 4B and 4C and paragraph [0024].

Claim 16 was amended to replace "said second member" with "one of said members", to cure an antecedent problem with the term "said second member". Support for this can be found in the specification in Figures 3, 4B and 4C, and in paragraphs [0028] through [0034].

Claim 19 was amended to replace "said second member that is" with "one of said members, said shoulder being" to cure an antecedent problem with the term "said second member", and also to more clearly point out that it is said shoulder that is

parallel with an inside surface of said ring. Support for this can be found in the specification in Figure 4A and paragraph [0027].

New claim 20

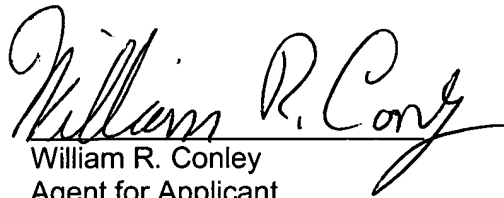
In new claim 20, support for the recited elements "...an explosively removable spreader, an explosively severed spreader, an explosively destroyed spreader, a mechanically severed spreader, and a mechanically destroyed spreader..." can be found in the specification in Figures 3, 4B and 4C and paragraphs [0029], [0031] and [0037]. Applicants additionally submit that these elements are not taught by the Cain reference, wherein it is taught for example in column 2, lines 49 – 66, "The means for expanding and contracting the ring 19.... comprises... a threaded rod 24.... rigidly secured to threaded rod 24 at its center is a sprocket 27.. whereby the free end portions of ring 19 will either be drawing toward each other, so as to contract the ring, or move away from each other, so as to expand the ring, depending upon the direction of rotation of sprocket 27."

Applicants also submit that the addition of claim 20 will not will not require an additional search or cause an undue burden upon the examiner, as all of the elements recited in claim 20 can be found in the original claim 1 and the sections of the specification listed above.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request that the Office reconsider the patentability of the invention in light of the amendments and arguments presented herein, and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. The Office is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account # 19-0131 for any necessary fees regarding this reply, including \$200 for one additional independent claim.

Respectfully submitted,



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